

## International SOS Now Available

# New Health Care Services for Remote Beneficiaries

Troy Kitch

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Active duty members and their families who live in remote locations of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East are now covered by a global health care service contract provided by International SOS Assistance, Inc. of Treviso, Pa.

TRICARE Management Activity selected International SOS, the largest remote site health care service in the world, from among many competitors to deliver remote health care services to military members and their families worldwide. International SOS already has a lot of experience serving military members and their families in remote locations in the Middle East, the Pacific and in Latin America. The organization is recognized throughout the world for coordinating and providing quality health care services from credentialed providers.

Prior to Sept. 1, International SOS services were only available in select countries in Central Command's Area of Responsibility for TRICARE Europe Remote beneficiaries.

Now the program is available in all remote locations worldwide, including regions of European Command designated for remote coverage. Remote locations are defined as more than 50 miles or more than a one-hour drive from a military Medical Treatment Facility.

"International SOS will deliver standardized, accessible health care to our beneficiaries in remote areas," said Maj. Wayne White, TRICARE Europe Director of Remote Health Care, "One of the major benefits of the program is that active duty and family members assigned in countries that do not have a U.S. military treatment facility will enjoy a 'cashless, claimless' benefit

when they use providers within the International SOS network."

International SOS provides routine, urgent and emergency medical services to active duty service members and their families who are assigned to remote locations. International SOS also

provides dental services for active duty members. The TRICARE Dental Program covers family dental needs.

The contract also provides urgent or emergency care for active duty service members who are TDY/TAD, deployed or on an authorized leave status in remote overseas locations.

"We're very excited about this new program," White said, "This contract is a major step towards standardizing and improving beneficiary care and monitoring in remote areas."

Remote beneficiaries will receive a identification card from their local TRICARE Point of Contact that will serve as their ticket to access care from International SOS' extensive network of providers. They may also receive information about the program from their POC.

International SOS is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 44-20-8762-8133 (beneficiaries may call collect or SOS will call back if this option is not available), or via email at [tricarelone@internationalsos.com](mailto:tricarelone@internationalsos.com).

More information about the TRICARE Europe Remote health care program is available online at: [www.europe.tricare.osd.mil/benefit/remot](http://www.europe.tricare.osd.mil/benefit/remot).



# TRICARE Europe Beneficiary Feedback

The information in this column features frequently asked questions from beneficiaries and answers provided by the TRICARE Europe Office staff.

**Q:** *Can dependents living in a remote location without their sponsor enroll with TRICARE Remote (Prime) and use International SOS?*

**A:** No. If you are DEERS eligible and reside with your sponsor and your sponsor is permanently assigned to a remote location, you are eligible to enroll in TRICARE Remote and may use International SOS. However, If you live in a remote location without your sponsor, your TRICARE benefit is limited to TRICARE Standard. With Standard, beneficiaries must pay an annual deductible and cost shares, and some Host Nation Providers may ask for payment up front for care that is rendered. Standard beneficiaries must also file claims with our overseas claims processor at: TRICARE Europe—WPS-Claims Processing, P.O. Box 8976, Madison WI, 53708-8976.

**Q:** *I am a retiree living in Europe and have TRICARE for Life with Medicare Part B. How can I obtain a TRICARE insurance card for off-base care?*

**A:** Currently TRICARE For Life Beneficiaries are not issued TRICARE insurance cards. The only forms of identification for proof of medical insurance that TRICARE For Life beneficiaries

require is a valid military ID card and a Medicare card. Overseas, TRICARE will pay for covered services, and you pay an annual deductible and cost shares. Medicare does not pay for services rendered overseas, but does pay for stateside services. For more information on the TRICARE For Life benefit, please contact your local TRICARE Service Center or see Fact Sheet #12, available at [www.europe.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.europe.tricare.osd.mil).

**Q:** *I am stationed in a Remote area. What happens if I do not enroll myself or family in International SOS?*

**A:** Actually, beneficiaries do not enroll in International SOS. If you are an active duty member stationed in European or Central Command and live more than 50 miles from a military medical treatment facility, you and your eligible family members may enroll in TRICARE Europe Remote. Once enrolled in Remote, you may use the services of International SOS. Active Duty members must enroll in TRICARE Europe Remote. Family members may choose between TRICARE Europe Remote and TRICARE Standard coverage. Using International SOS is optional for eligible family members, but if you do not use the program, you will have no assurance of quality, you may have to pay up front, and you'll have to file a claim. If you choose this option, your local TRICARE POC can help you file medical claims, and can receive payment checks for hand-delivery to you or your provider.

## Patient Liaisons Are Available to Help You

**Troy Kitch**

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Your spouse is deployed and you need medical attention. Your Primary Care Manager refers you to a downtown hospital. You are afraid: you can't speak the language, you're worried about the care you will receive, and you may not understand paperwork that you may be asked to complete.

Imagine having a person who could help you with your host nation medical appointment, translate for you, and check up on you regularly to ensure the care was going well.

Enter your Patient Liaison. Most military Medical Treatment Facilities are staffed with Patient Liaisons who can help you navigate your host nation health care system with ease.

Liaisons speak fluent English as well as your host nation language, and they are skilled at handling host nation medical system procedures. In fact, in most cases, they are already well acquainted with your host nation provider or the people at the host nation facility where you are referred. If you are admitted to a host nation hospital after duty hours or on a weekend, have someone contact your nearest military medical treatment facility. They will be able to make sure that a Patient Liaison is notified of your admission.

The following is a synopsis of the key services provided by your host nation Patient Liaison:

- They will help you coordinate care in your host nation medical system
- They will translate for you if your host nation medical staff cannot speak English
- They will assist you with scheduling appointments, consultations, tests and follow-up exams
- They will help you with your medical bill payment and claim if needed.

After you receive care from a host nation provider, you will typically receive a handwritten report that lists your diagnosis, treatment, medication instructions and other important information. Your Patient Liaison is available to help you understand this document if it is not in English.

For more information about the Patient Liaison program or TRICARE Europe's network of host nation providers, contact your local TRICARE Service Center or log on to the TRICARE Europe web page at [www.europe.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.europe.tricare.osd.mil).





# Morbid Obesity Treatments and Trends

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TRICARE Europe Public Affairs & Marketing

Morbid obesity is an epidemic that affects millions of people worldwide. While there are both non-surgical and surgical methods to treat this serious condition, surgery is an increasingly popular choice among many patients. While TRICARE currently covers three types of surgery to treat morbid obesity, TRICARE Europe officials stress that beneficiaries should explore non-surgical alternatives before pursuing these options.

Since TRICARE only provides coverage if certain criteria are met, preauthorization is also required prior to any surgery.

"I want our beneficiaries to be informed consumers," said Linda Glynn, Regional Nurse Case Manager for TRICARE Europe, "Morbid obesity surgeries are serious procedures that can have serious risks and side-effects.

Once people undergo such a surgery, they must also commit to many difficult lifestyle changes. If they don't follow through, they may face even greater health problems. That's a lot to consider. I urge beneficiaries to take the time to do some research on the Internet and talk to others who have had surgery before they pursue this option."

What is morbid obesity? Morbid Obesity means the body weight is more than 100 pounds over ideal weight for height and bone

structure, and such weight is associated with other medical conditions known to have higher mortality rates when combined with morbid obesity; or the body weight is 200 percent or more of ideal weight for height and bone structure. The term "morbid" in this context means the obesity is associated with disease.

TRICARE Europe covers gastric bypass, gastric stapling, and gastroplasty surgeries to treat morbid obesity. While Glynn notes that these treatments can be very effective, she said that surgery is the final step after all other options

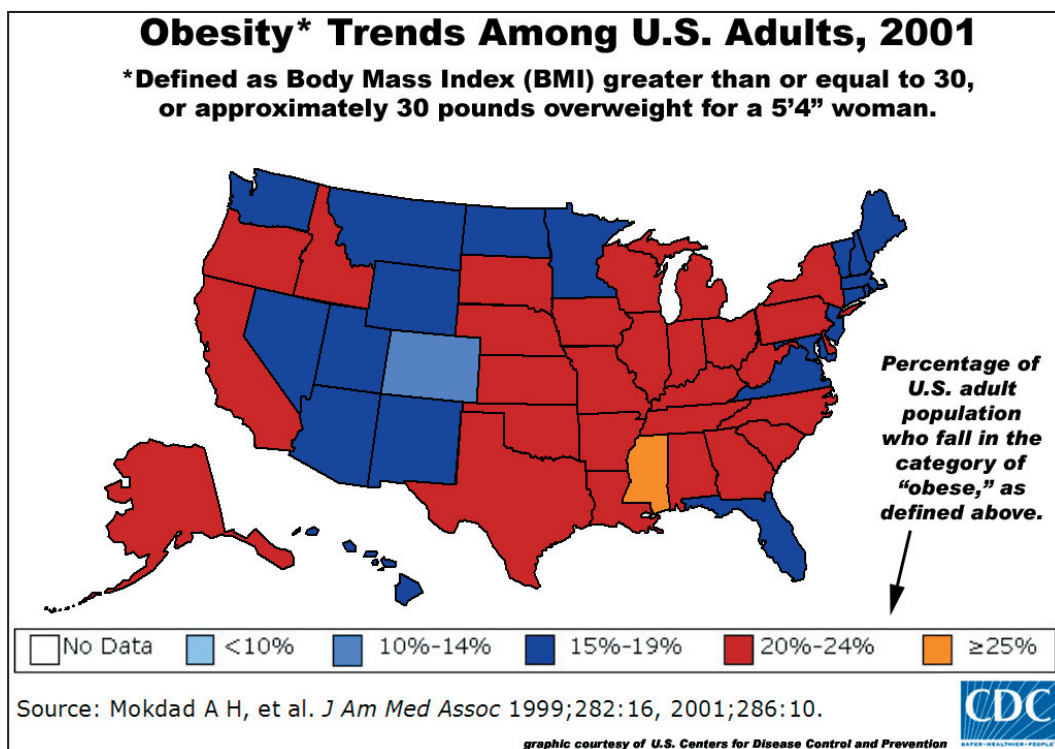
have been exhausted.

If a beneficiary decides to pursue a surgical solution, TRICARE Europe will evaluate the request to determine TRICARE coverage. This preauthorization process is not intended to be a burden, but is a tool to help people navigate through a complicated process and a method to ensure that people do not get stuck with the bill for a costly operation. It is also a fair process, Glynn said. If a patient is denied authorization to receive morbid obesity surgery, he or she may appeal the decision.

"Our primary goal is to be advocates for the patient," Glynn said.

Beneficiaries may get more information about morbid obesity and available treatments from their Primary Care Manager and local wellness centers. Local TRICARE Service Center representatives are available to discuss the preauthorization process as well as TRICARE benefits. Glynn notes, however, that often the best place to start is with available support services at the base/post level.

"Each Service has health and wellness programs and nutritionists that are available to help," she said, "We want to empower people to take ownership of their health. Opting for morbid obesity surgery is a major decision that doesn't end with the surgery — it's a lifelong commitment. It's really important to take the time to explore all of your options."



# Beneficiary Needs Remain Top Priority with Retirement of Medical Transport Aircraft

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The retirement of the U.S. Air Force's C-9 Nightingale Aero-medical Evacuation aircraft this month will lead to changes in medical travel, but TRICARE beneficiaries can expect continued access to quality health care. These changes will not affect TRICARE Europe benefits. There are still many different ways for beneficiaries to receive routine, priority, or emergency care in Europe.

For routine care, local military medical treatment facility (MTF) staffs will work with patients to determine the best available care options. In some cases, patients who need certain types of routine care may be authorized to travel to larger MTFs via military or commercial air or ground transportation. In other cases, patients who need routine care that is locally available may be referred to members of TRICARE Europe's Preferred Provider Network (PPN). How and where a patient will be treated will be managed on a case-by-case basis by local MTF staffs in collaboration with patients and their families.

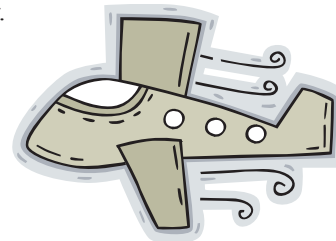
The quality of care offered by host nation PPN members is absolutely comparable to the care that U.S. doctors provide, according to Air Force Col. (Dr.) James Rundell, TRICARE Europe Executive Director. Over the past year, TRICARE Europe has worked hard to evaluate the quality of care provided by the PPN, and the network has been comprehensively analyzed to ensure it can meet the needs of TRICARE Europe beneficiaries when the C-9 retires, he said.

"We expect the impact of the C-9 divestiture to be minimal. This is because of our network adequacy analysis and because many MTFs have already been using host nation providers with more frequency in recent months due to ongoing contingencies and deployments," Rundell said, "We have over 8,000 members in the PPN throughout Europe who augment the military health care system year round — and we consistently get excellent feedback from beneficiaries about the care they receive from these members. The retirement of the C-9 will not change the excellent health care services that our beneficiaries expect."

While the health care experience in a host nation clinic or hospital may not be exactly the same as in the U.S., Rundell stressed that the providers in the TRICARE Europe PPN are fully qualified, quality medical providers. TRICARE Service Center staff members and Patient Liaisons are also available to help bridge cultural and language gaps. These personnel un-

derstand the local culture and clinical practice environment and can help beneficiaries better understand their experience when referred to a host nation provider.

"Facilities and processes may be different than many of us are used to," Rundell said, "But living with cultural differences is part of serving overseas. Our goal at TRICARE Europe is that you receive quality outcomes of care."



TRICARE Europe continually monitors the quality of care provided by host nation providers in the PPN to ensure beneficiaries receive the best possible care. TRICARE Europe's quality monitoring program is based on the best network quality monitoring practices used by MTFs theater-wide.

"We constantly gather data about each provider in our PPN from patient surveys and other feedback tools," he said, "We use that data to make decisions about the future development of the PPN program. At this point, our PPN program is more robust than it has ever been. If you are referred 'downtown' for care, we want you to know that you are in good hands."

TRICARE Europe's quality monitoring program also helps to ensure that each member of the PPN continues to meet high standards of care. If an MTF finds that a provider is not meeting standards, they have the option to discontinue the PPN agreement with that member. TRICARE Europe's PPN 'membership' agreements are reviewed for renewal on an ongoing, regular basis.

"The members of our PPN represent the best-available host nation providers in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East," Rundell said, "We're proud of the relationships we have with providers around Europe, and we're confident that our beneficiaries will be satisfied with the care they receive."

It is very important that beneficiaries complete patient customer comment cards to assist TRICARE Europe and the military MTF monitor quality of care. TRICARE Europe centrally collects patient feedback to look for trends and patterns that will help MTFs identify and best use the highest quality providers.

For more information on the TRICARE Europe Preferred Provider Network, see [www.europe.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.europe.tricare.osd.mil) or stop by your local TRICARE Service Center. Beneficiaries may learn more about medical travel changes resulting from the retirement of the C-9 from their local MTF.



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